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journals.sagepub.com/home/nad**Matilda Wrede-Jäntti**

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Kerstin Stenius, editor-in-chief for many years of *Nordic Studies on Alcohol and Drugs (NAD)*, is retiring after decades of commitment to alcohol and drug research in both Sweden and Finland – and beyond. Her networks are indeed global: she has chaired the International Society of Addiction Journal Editors (ISAJE) and The Kettil Bruun Society for Social and Epidemiological Research on Alcohol, and she is a founder and board member of the International Confederation of ATOD Research Associations (ICARA).

While still in upper secondary school in Gothenburg, Sweden, Stenius was inspired by her Swedish teacher and considered studying literature and becoming a journalist. However, social work came to have a stronger draw. This was at the end of the 1960s, when the social climate was influenced by the war in Vietnam, Marxist movements, and taking a stand for the socially vulnerable. There was a strong conviction that it was possible to change and improve

society, and that one could make an active contribution. The climate at the School of Social Studies in Gothenburg was intellectually stimulating, and there was palpable interest for theory among the students. The classics were read diligently.

Meeting historian Henrik Stenius brought Kerstin to Finland. One needed proficiency in Finnish as well as knowledge of the social security system to be able to work as a social worker in Finland. Kerstin also cultivated ideas of continued education. A scholarship soon made studies in social policy possible at the University of Helsinki.

Kerstin Stenius is quick to underscore that she has been very lucky in life. During her studies in Gothenburg she became interested in (anti)psychiatry and wrote her master's thesis on immigrants and mental health services. In Finland she learnt that professor Elina Haavio-Mannila at the University of Helsinki had done related research. She visited the

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professor's office and was hired on the spot as a research assistant. Several interesting and educational years together with Haavio-Mannila resulted in research reports and opened the door to scientific work.

As a Swedish-trained social worker, with some studies in social policy, and as a mother of three, Stenius started working as a culture journalist for the Finnish broadcasting company Yle. In a seminal programme, she interviewed Kettil Bruun on the relation between the medical profession and the pharmacological industry. This interview contributed to her next opportunity: to take on, shape, and take charge of the scientific journal *Nordic Studies on Alcohol and Drugs* (then called *Alkoholpolitik – Tidsskrift för nordisk alkoholforskning*), which was founded on Bruun's initiative in 1983. The journal had its offices at ALKO, the Finnish alcohol monopoly, which at the time was an employer with considerable resources.

Finnish and Nordic alcohol research had a very good reputation internationally, and the journal was able to raise the bar from the start. Kettil Bruun was an important background figure during the first years. He was a member of the editorial board together with many other renowned and engaged persons in the field, such as Pia Rosenqvist in the Nordic Council for Alcohol Research. The Nordic Council became a guarantor of the independence of the journal in relation to ALKO. Stenius fondly recalls that Kettil Bruun gave her the chance to travel to England and get acquainted with the work done at *Addiction*, the leading journal in addiction research. The *NAD* guidelines established 35 years ago with Bruun's help have stayed almost the same.

Changing editorial work

After a few years the status of ALKO changed; *NAD* needed to find other sources of funding to match its growing ambitions and to compensate for the dwindling financial support from ALKO, which eventually ended altogether. The alcohol monopolies in the neighbouring

countries, Systembolaget in Sweden and Vinmonopolet in Norway, became new funders. Gabriel Romanus in particular at Systembolaget was an important supporter of the journal. Soon several Nordic public authorities also came to contribute to the finances.

Stenius notes multiple times the importance and value of working in a Nordic context. She emphasises the benefits for research of coming from a small country that cannot take its conditions and assumptions as the norm, as one often does in the Anglo-Saxon world. One's national views need questioning! "In the Nordic countries we gain special insights and a special competence through continuous comparisons with the other Nordic countries". This is also evident in *Nordic Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, where the editorial team has consisted of a Nordic editorial board and one or two editorial office persons, Lea af Hällström, Thomas Rosenberg, Nina Edgren-Henrichsson, Johan Sandelin, Matilda Wrede-Jäntti, Matilda Hellman, Tom Kettunen, and, not least, Pirkko Hautamäki, whose mastering of the English language has raised the quality of many research contributions: "My great joy has been to work with independent, friendly, and research-oriented people in the editorial office".

Looking back, Stenius points out that everything used to be smaller and slower, both in research and science publication. Technical developments in particular have led to great changes. Submitted manuscripts used to be typed or even handwritten in the early 1980s. They were sent to the printer and came back as long strips of text that Stenius and subeditor Lea af Hällström read aloud to each other, making edits and sending them back and forth to the typesetters. The journal had a demarcated circle of writers and readers, with whom the editor-in-chief was acquainted. You had a better overview of who was reading about and engaged in your own research area. Gradually, the focus of the journal also changed, expanding in the 1990s from alcohol issues to include drugs, and later gambling and other addiction-related problems.

Fast-paced structural developments in science publication have required continuous development work, reflection, and tough choices. For example, the journal had to take a stand regarding the language question: should the previously wholly Scandinavian journal start publishing texts in English? For democratic reasons, decision makers and practitioners should have access to the most recent research-based knowledge in questions on alcohol and drugs. When researchers wanted to publish more and more in English, to reach out internationally with their findings, the solution for *NAD* was to complement the journal with *popNAD*, a popular science website where summaries of the articles are presented in a digestible form in a Nordic language. “I believe we are the only scientific journal in this field with such a complement, and we can be proud of this”, says Stenius.

Treatment system research

In addition to being editor-in-chief, Stenius has conducted research in both Finland and Sweden. She has delved into treatment systems in Sweden and Finland, often with historical and comparative perspectives. Her research has focused on the relations between public and private sectors, self-help movements, social rights of service users, and the effect of system reforms, particularly for those with limited resources. Her doctoral dissertation explored the privatisation of substance abuse treatment in Sweden in the 1990s. In the book *Valfri välfärd* (Vamstad & Stenius, 2015) Stenius shows how various citizen groups – upper secondary school students, substance users, and seniors within the home-help services – have experienced the Swedish freedom of choice and possibility to influence the content of the services provided to them. The outcome showed how the more vulnerable groups consistently had the least chance to influence and choose. These lessons are also relevant for the analysis of present treatment system developments in Finland.

Threats to global balance in scientific publishing

Questions of democracy, power, and influence are also important within science publishing. Through her involvement in the International Society for Addiction Journal Editors, Stenius has co-edited a volume for researchers on writing and publishing scientific texts: *Publishing addiction science* (Babor et al., 2017). The third edition of the book is freely available on the web. It is especially targeted to less experienced researchers, and researchers in countries with developing research traditions. The aim is to improve their chances of getting published. Stenius was also instrumental in securing Norwegian financial backing for the *African Journal of Drug and Alcohol Studies*, the sole African scientific journal in the field. It became for some years a sibling publication to the Nordic journal.

Kerstin Stenius observes that science publication is influenced by the globalisation and concentration of economic power. Researchers are required, by their universities or for career reasons, to publish a lot, preferably in English, and in journals with high impact factors. The largest, Anglo-American, publications, published by three to four dominant publishers have managed to establish an enormous advantage as publication channels in relation to smaller journals and publishers. This leads to small, national, or regional journals being badly disadvantaged, especially if they want to publish in their local language, such as a Portuguese-language journal in Brazil. As a consequence, research risks becoming less rich, less relevant, and less accessible for practitioners in many parts of the world, especially in developing countries. This process is difficult to halt partly because researchers, in their hunt for meriting publications, are a cog in the wheel.

Nordic Studies on Alcohol and Drugs is today the only Open Access journal in the field of alcohol and drug research where authors do not need to pay to publish, whereas other journals can charge thousands of euros in

processing fees for one article. The democratic principle that makes it possible for anyone who has written a good peer-reviewed article to have it published for free is made possible through grants and subsidies from the Nordic countries. “This so-called Platinum Open Access is another feature of *NAD* that we can be very proud of, and I hope the Nordic authorities will recognise this in the future as well”, Stenius says.

Kerstin Stenius concludes by saying that she has had the great privilege to work in friendly and creative research environments, in Finland and Sweden and with international colleagues, and with many particularly engaged and knowledgeable researchers, such as Pia Rosenqvist, Klaus Mäkelä, Robin Room, Tom Babor, and Jessica Storbjörk, to mention a few. “I’m quite sure that I’ve had the luck to experience a golden age of alcohol and drug research. And now I’m very happy and totally confident to leave the journal to Matilda Hellman. I couldn’t think of a better successor.”

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